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ANNUAL CENSUS OF THE INSANE AND FEEBLE-MINDED,  
EPILEPTICS AND INEBRIATES IN INSTITUTIONS IN  
THE UNITED STATES JANUARY 1, 1918.

(Published in *Mental Hygiene* for January, 1919.)

This is the second annual census of the defective classes published under the auspices of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene and prepared by Horatio M. Pollock, statistician of the New York State Hospital Commission and Edith M. Furbush, statistician of the National Committee for Mental Hygiene.

The study is based on reports from 575 institutions, of which 346 were public and 229 private. No attempt was made to secure data from almshouses, penal or reformatory institutions.

On January 1, 1918, there were 239,820 insane patients under treatment in institutions in the United States. Compared with the census of 1917, taken under the same auspices, the number shows a total increase of 6,947 patients. The sex distribution of the insane under treatment varies widely in the several states; but the relative proportion of the sexes has shifted but little. The ratio shown by the present census is 110.55 males to 100 females. The women outnumber the men in some of the eastern and southern states, while the men are greatly in excess in most of the western states.

There is a steady upward trend in the ratio of insane in institutions to the general population. In most of the states where the increase of the insane in institutions has been most marked it is unquestionably due to enlarged provisions for their care. In short, the high rates of insanity in the different states do not necessarily indicate a greater prevalence of mental disease but rather that a larger proportion of the total number of insane in the community is being cared for.

The census shows a total of 39,381 feeble-minded persons in institutions, an increase of 2,567 as compared with 1917. Institutional care of the feeble-minded is not well developed in several states. In Alabama and Georgia there are no state institutions for the feeble-minded. In Arizona, Arkansas, Delaware, Florida, Idaho, Louisiana, Mississippi, New Mexico, Nevada, South Carolina, Tennessee, Utah and West Virginia, the feeble-minded are cared for in state hospitals for the insane. "In no state does the provision for the feeble-minded equal that made for the insane." Indeed, it is borne out by the statistics that private institutional care of the feeble-minded is relatively farther advanced than public institutional care.

It is a hopeful sign that many state institutions for feeble-minded have recently been established. During 1917 and 1918, five states authorized the establishment of institutions for feeble-minded and in seven others additional institutional facilities were provided for this class.

Epileptics to the number of 11,944 were found in institutions on January 1, 1918. As is well known, only a small proportion of the total number of epileptics is cared for in institutions of any kind.

There were 3,565 inebriates under institutional care, and by far the

largest proportion in public institutions. For the census year, the inebriates in institutions showed a total decrease of 1,326, or 37.2 percent. "The figures give conclusive proof that inebriety is a decreasing rather than a growing evil in this country." In speaking of the wide variations in the number of inebriates cared for in the several states, the authors say that it "is partly due to the lack of institutions for inebriates in some states and partly due to the lack of inebriates in others."

The National Committee for Mental Hygiene performs a genuine service in taking an annual census—even if it be quite summary—of the various defective classes in public and private institutions. The work has been done most carefully and supplements in a desirable manner the too infrequent reports of the Federal Census.